

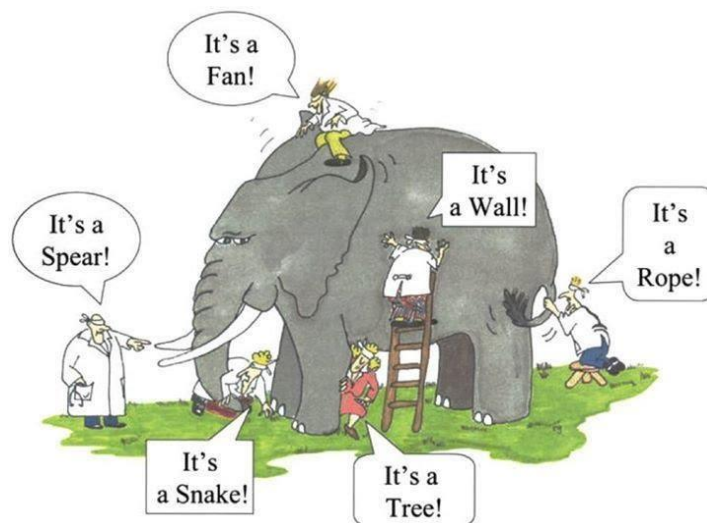


SESSION 5: UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION

As already mentioned, the material in this workbook is not from professional input, but rather from decades of personal experience in addiction and programmes. Some things have been helpful, some things have given insight and have provided coping tools, and other things have compounded the problem, or caused “stuckness”. A full and clear understanding of addiction from a Biblical worldview has taken a long time to formulate. It is still forming and coming into sharper focus.

There are many opinions as to what type of battle we are facing when it comes to addiction. Addiction is not only a complex problem that affects people on every level of their being: socio-emotional, spiritual, mental and physical.

“IT’S AN ELEPHANT”



<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/driventoabstraction/2018/07/blind-men-elephant-folklore-knowledge/>



NOTE: From the above link print put the picture of the elephant or project it onto a screen.

Despite the fact that there can be a room full of addicts or families of addicts with the same background ground, people can still have different experiences, which also affect people's understanding of their surroundings.

Addiction is like the elephant. There are so many layers and reasons and explanations around addiction. Same elephant; different experience; different perspectives; different understanding.

Despite the fact that a room full of addicts and the same back ground, people can still have different experiences, which also affect people's understanding of their surroundings. Understanding addiction is not universal.



- How is each person in the picture experiencing the elephant?
- Who is right?
- Is one person more right than another?
- If you were present in the picture as a "seeing person", how would you get the blind people to understand that they are all feeling and experiencing an elephant.



Each blind person could correctly explain what they felt. Each one of them was correct BUT only had a limited perspective. Addiction is similar in that it is only when we have an understanding of the complex aspects of addiction that we can begin to tackle it.



What are some reasons and explanations for addiction that you have heard?



NOTE: look for answers like

- An incurable disease
- A choice
- Due to peer pressure
- It is in the genes
- Lifelong struggle
- Environmental and cultural exposure
- Stimulus impulse learning
- Negative reinforcement
- Adoption

The stronghold of addiction, combined with bad habits that go hand in hand with addiction, causes the disintegration of relationships, productivity (job losses, dropping out, starting but not completing tasks and commitments), as well as mental, physical, emotional and spiritual destruction.

This led to where you are right now: sitting in a CHOOSE LIFE support group, knowing that you are not in control and experiencing unhappiness and misery, and your addiction is leading you to death on many levels. Until we know the truth about and gain insight into the fight we are in, we cannot even begin to win the battle. When dealing with addiction, there are several hidden blind spots that will sabotage our path to addiction freedom. Like only feeling one part of the elephant.

“IT’S LIKE A TREE”

Another way to look at addiction is by considering a tree.



Describe the healthy part of the tree.



ASK: How do you know it is healthy?

- It has lots of healthy-looking leaves.
- It is bearing flowers and fruit.

ASK: What things contribute to making the tree healthy?

- Correct soil
- Right amount of water, sun nutrients etc.

If any of these things are not right the tree can stop thriving.

ASK: What would happen if the root system was destroyed or poisoned?

- The whole tree would die.

Because we live in a fallen, sin-sick, sin-riddled world there will always be a spiritual battle. Just as many

things can cause the tree not to thrive, so too there are many reasons that the tree of our lives may not thrive.

But at the root of it is Satan. God's plan and desire are that we walk in freedom, while Satan's plan and desire are to bring bondage and death.

Choose Life roots itself in God's blueprint for mankind.



Spend time reading the following verses.

What do they tell you about Satan who is at the root of our pain and addiction?

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;" John 10: 10

"...for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." 2 Corinthians 11:14

"For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." Revelation 12: 10

Jesus said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8: 44

*"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a **roaring lion** looking for someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8*



Share and discuss your thoughts.



Ensure that you have studied Genesis 1-3 and all other verses included before you facilitate this session.

In Genesis 1 and 2, God creates a perfect world. At the pinnacle of creation is Adam and Eve. They are unique and different from the rest of creation because they are "made in the image of God" Genesis 1:26-27.

The other thing that makes Adam and Eve unique is that they are created with a **FREE WILL**. They can **CHOOSE** to worship and live in a relationship with God

He places them in a perfect place called The Garden of Eden. In this garden, all relationships are perfect too.

- Adam and Eve are in a perfect and uninterrupted relationship with God.
- Adam and Eve are in perfect relationship with one another.
- Adam and Eve are in a perfect relationship with the environment.

In Genesis 3 Satan enters the scene. We can read about Satan's fall from Heaven in Isaiah 14: 12-24. We have already looked at some verses that tell us what he is like and what his plans are for us. Satan

tempts Eve not to obey the command of God and she gives into the temptation and Adam follows suit. Sin enters the world and EVERYTHING changes.

- They had walked in perfect relationship with God and now they are ashamed and hide from God. Genesis 3: 10
- Adam and Eve's perfect relationship is broken.
- Their relationship with the environment was broken
- Satan became the enemy of humans

What does this mean for us today?

It means that Satan wants to kill, steal and destroy us and he will use anything he can to make this happen. He is the poison and the destroyer of the very root systems of our lives. Sin and Satan are our opponent:

- We still have our free will. We can choose God or we can choose sin and the ways of Satan. This means that we can hurt people.
- But it also means that other people can choose to hurt us.
- We have to have sin dealt with because our relationship with God is broken.
- It also means that there is death, disease, natural disasters, accidents, disabilities and the stresses and strains of daily life and work.
- We live in a sin-sick world, where sin has poisoned everything and Satan wants to take us down.

This includes addiction.

The Good News is that God has a plan to reverse all this. A plan to remove sin, replace death with life and brokenness with healing. This is at the very heart of **CHOOSE LIFE**.

All this is clearly seen in John 10:10 *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*



& What has the thief stolen, killed or destroyed in your life? If you could walk away from addiction today, forever and experience life to the full, what would that look like?



Ephesians 6: 12 tells us, *"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world and the wicked spirits in the heavenly realms"* Ephesians 6:12

Our battles are not against flesh and blood. Our fight is not against ourselves or fighting with our family members, but clearly a spiritual fight. It is evident that addiction is nothing else but sin and that sin is prompted by the Devil, the father of lies that wants to steal rob and destroy.

Our battles are not against flesh and blood. Our fight is not against ourselves. Our fight is not with our family members. This verse clearly tells us that our fight is a spiritual fight. Addiction and the behaviours that go with it is nothing else but sin. Sin has its origin in the Devil. Satan prompts and encourages sin. Satan is known as the father of lies (John 8: 44) that wants to steal rob and destroy (see John 10:10).

In Deuteronomy 30 the Israelites have left Egypt and have lived in the wilderness for forty years. Just before they enter the Promised Land of Canaan God urges His people to **CHOOSE LIFE**.



“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Everyday we make hundreds of choices. Many of them we are not even aware of and it is of little consequence if we make one choice over another.

For example:

I CHOOSE the clothes I wear each day.

I CHOOSE what I am going to eat for breakfast.

I CHOOSE if I am going to brush my teeth before or after breakfast.

I CHOOSE where I am going to sit in class or in a restaurant.



The very word CHOOSE tells us that there are options. What are some choices that are easy to make because of personal preferences? For example:

Kentucky or MacDonald's?

Tea or coffee?

How many sugars?

Then we have choices regarding our addiction like:

How will I get the money for the next fix? Do I have money, will I steal, lend or manipulate others to give me money, or will I knock the dealer or buy on credit?

How will I get there? Do I have a vehicle, will I walk, run, take a bus or taxi to get there?

What type of drugs will I buy? Crack, Cocaine, Khat, Heroin, Weed or LSD?

How much drugs will I buy?

If I buy crack, will I buy a R50 piece, R300, R700 or a mooney?

Do I have a pipe, gauge, lighter and tape?

Where will I have my first hit? In the drug house, in my car, around the corner? But don't tell me you are going to wait until you are home, cause no addict ever does this.

Using this example is just to show us how many choices we actually have to make before we even pick up drugs or score. We need to interrupt these choices and find ways for even the first thought manifests into action.

Some choices are really hard to make, especially when you are unsure of what the result of each choice will be. Memorise therefore **Deuteronomy 30:19** as a strategy to help stop when thoughts of using arise.



CHOOSE LIFE in Deuteronomy is telling us that if we don't **CHOOSE LIFE** we will **CHOOSE DEATH**.

- What are some death-giving choices you have made?
- What choices do you regret having made?

- Can you think of some life-giving choices you have made?
- What are some life-giving choices you could make this year?
- ***Share a practical example of what CHOOSING LIFE could look like in relation to your addiction.***



Encourage participants to share their answers.

NOTE: The facilitator should share their answers to the above questions first.



John 14:6 (NIV) "I am the way the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me."

Here, we are reminded of the claim of Jesus Christ. If Jesus claims to be life and God tells us to CHOOSE LIFE, it follows that we are to first and foremost choose Jesus. We CHOOSE LIFE by seeking God and His gracious forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

The decisions we make and the consequences of these decisions influence our lives on many levels. But they also influence the lives of our family and the lives of our children. This is especially true about addiction. Many families and children are being destroyed because of substance or alcohol abuse. Parents get separated; children get taken away from their parents, physical, emotional, verbal and even sexual abuse is part of the substance abuse package.

The choices we make in life can change our entire lives for better or for worse. These same choices can determine the lives of our descendants. Let us decide to CHOOSE LIFE. Then let us encourage and teach our children to choose this abundant life as well.